United Nations E/CN.17/2000/3/Add.2

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
24 February 2000

Original: English

Commission on Sustainable Development
Eighth session
24 April-5 May 2000

Multi-Stakeholder dialogue on sustainable agriculture

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

Discussion paper contributed by the International Federation of Agricultural Producers and Via Campesina*

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* The views and opinions expressed in the present discussion paper are those of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers and Via Campesina and do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations.

00-31555 (E) 150300

UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

8th session

Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue Meeting On Sustainable Agriculture

Discussion paper prepared by

International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) and Via Campesina

FARM ORGANIZATION INTRODUCTION

This document has been prepared jointly by two separate organizations, which represent the international farm movement – the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) and the Via Campesina.

The Via Campesina is an international movement coordinating organizations of peasant and small-scale farmers, agricultural workers, indigenous peoples, and rural women. With member organizations from more than 63 countries organized into eight regions, the Via Campesina is dedicated to building solidarity among people of the land while respecting the diversity and autonomy of member organizations. The objective of the Via Campesina is to create rural economies, which are based on respect for people and the earth, on food sovereignty and on fair trade. If defends the rights of peasants and farmers to land, to produce food and to protect their own resources and cultures.

IFAP is a representative organization of family farmers at the global level. It currently has in membership 85 national farmers' organizations from 60 countries representing over 500 million farm families from a wide variety of farming situations. The majority of the members are from developing countries. The purpose of IFAP as laid down in its constitution in 1946 is "to secure the fullest co-operation between organizations of agricultural primary producers in meeting the optimal nutritional and consumptive requirements of the peoples of the world and in improving the economic and social status of all who live by and on the land". In particular, IFAP is attached to the family farm as the basis of a sustainable system of agriculture.

The Via Campesina believes that the sustainability of agriculture depends on the kinds of production systems and the role that farming people have within those systems. Agricultural

and other policies, the role of governments and industry, as well as the objectives of research and trade, must all be fundamentally reshaped to give priority to protecting biological and cultural diversity, the land and people of the land, in order to reverse the dangerous current destruction.

IFAP believes that farmers' organizations must constitute a central pillar of any agricultural development strategy. The Federation views agricultural development in terms of the empowerment of farmers – without self-help efforts through farmers' organizations, there can be no sustainable agricultural development. For IFAP, agriculture is foremost an economic activity; only an economically viable agriculture will be capable of meeting the objectives of environmental sustainability.

OVERVIEW

Despite the vast differences among farming peoples and the conditions under which they grow food in the various regions of the world, farmers agree that it is necessary to develop and maintain practises, which fulfil the following requirements:

- ***Ecologically sound***: agriculture must be based on environmentally sound production methods so as not to damage possibilities for future farmers.

- ***A vibrant rural economy***: the success of any sustainable agriculture system must be viewed in the context of strengthening rural communities, providing economic opportunities and ensuring a balanced development between rural and urban areas.

Food is a basic human right

Governments and international agencies, including the United Nations and the World Trade Organization, must recognize food as a basic human right. Everyone must have access to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food in sufficient quantity and quality to sustain a healthy life with full human dignity. Each nation should declare that access to food as a constitutional right and guarantee the development of the primary sector to ensure the concrete realization of this fundamental right.

1. Choices in agricultural production techniques, consumption patterns and safety regulations: potentials and threats to sustainable agriculture.

Choices in agricultural production techniques are determined by many factors. These include: climate, local production conditions, availability of appropriate technology, existence of essential infrastructure, farm programs such as crop insurance or price guarantees which affect the degree of a farmer's exposure to risk, and the fiscal and regulatory context in which farmers operate.

Potential of sustainable agriculture

Agriculture has the potential to make a unique and central contribution to a more sustainable society. Not only can it assure the continued development of an environmentally-sound supply of food to meet the needs of the rapidly expanding world population, it can also provide for the conservation of the rural environment with its wildlife habitat, genetic biodiversity, landscapes and culture.

In an environment of more open global markets and increased competition, market forces will not be able to deliver the multiple functions expected by society from agriculture. There is no market for many of these services, including environmental services. They are 'public goods' which need to be rewarded through public funding.

Security of land tenure

Having access to land and security of tenure is the best possible incentive for individual farmers to preserve and improve soil fertility. In order to avoid dependency on external financiers, credit can be organized through credit groups or co-operatives.

Sustainable management of natural resources and the preservation of biological diversity can only be undertaken successfully from a sound economic basis with security of tenure.

Insecure land tenure arrangements of farmers discourage them from investing in more sustainable farming systems for fear of not reaping the future returns. In the initial stages, adoption of sustainable agriculture farming systems may result in a decline in farm productivity, until the soil has regained a certain level of natural fertility. With an unstable tenurial and economic position, farmers are often not willing to take this risk with their main source of income. Similarly, unenlightened landowners are not willing to sacrifice present gains for the future rewards of sustained increase in farm productivity. Tenants, renters or contract farmers usually do not enjoy decision-making privileges in their farms.

Bias for productivity enhancing programs

Faced with the demands of a rapidly increasing population, and a liberalized trading environment that allows imports of cheaper agricultural products, many developing country governments are forced to adopt productivity enhancing agricultural programs that can deliver results in a short span of time.

Government farm programs therefore often depend heavily on high yielding seed varieties and high levels of chemical inputs to boost productivity.

Under these circumstances, it is very difficult for smallholder-led sustainable agriculture programs that can only promise minimal support, to compete with government programs offering a package complete with capital, technical and post harvest support.

Farmers may perceive sustainable agriculture technologies to be time consuming and laborious compared with readily available and commercially produced inorganic inputs that yield instant results. In addition, with the worsening profitability situation of farming due to high input costs, farmers sometimes discourage their children from following their footsteps. This diminishes the agricultural labour supply that could have been harnessed in promoting sustainable agriculture. This phenomenon is coupled with high unemployment rates in many countries. The displacement of peasant and farm families, especially youth, from the countryside is a major contributor to massive un- and underemployment in most developing countries. .

Biotechnology and the use of genetically modified organisms

Farmer concerns

- Risk of control of genetic resources and seeds by a small number of large companies
- Interference by these companies in farming operations
- Loss of biodiversity
- Genetic pollutions with unknown, possibly uncontrollable long-term negative environmental impact.

Regulatory and voluntary frameworks

Policy-makers need to look at what farmers can contribute to society, and then develop ways to improve performance to deliver this contribution. In doing this, they need to maintain a careful balance between regulation and policy incentives.

Farmers' organisations in many countries have developed codes of practice, and set up quality assurance schemes, including codes of good environmental farming practices such as whole farm planning, eco-audits and environmental accounting.

Farmers' organizations have also taken the lead in voluntary, community-based initiatives. For example, they have been active in setting up water user groups, and land care programs. They have also strengthened co-operation and dialogue on farming practices with others involved in the food chain, such as researchers, consumers, environmentalists, suppliers, and retailers.

Sustainable use of resources

Society is increasingly concerned about new objectives such as protection of the environment, and food safety and quality.

Demands on farmers have therefore changed. Consumers are no longer only interested in the intrinsic qualities of the products they purchase. Increasingly, they also want to know how the product was produced. In particular, they want to know the effects of production methods on the environment, on the way farm animals were treated, and whether crops and livestock have been genetically modified.

Most farmers are today actively involved in various strategies to achieve greater agricultural sustainability. These include:

Better targeting in the use of farm inputs.

- While the overall use of pesticides globally continues to rise, the use of pesticides has been reduced dramatically in some places – by over 50 per cent in many industrialized countries. The use of integrated crop protection methods has increased. Nutrient balance is being optimized, e.g. through nutrient bookkeeping. Huge investments have been made for manure storage and management in response to the terrible environmental problems created by intensive livestock operations.

Increased use of conservation farming methods

- Filter strips have become commonplace around watercourses, where farmers use no chemicals at all. Water is being used more efficiently in irrigation systems. Wastewater is being recycled. Some of the cropland in North and South America is farmed under 'no-till' systems. Minimum tillage, or conservation tillage is increasingly being practiced by farmers in Africa. Production under glass is moving to completely closed systems. Precision farming techniques are being used more widely. While many of these practices have beneficial conservation aspects, most rely heavily on fossil energy use with the attendant environmental cost.

2. Best practices in land resources management to achieve sustainable food cycles

Farmers' rights

A very grave concern is the privatisation of natural resources. Agricultural and non-agricultural biodiversity is being patented or brought under severe breeders rights regulations. Both undermine farmers' rights to free access to erstwhile common genetic resources and the right to develop and market their own seed varieties.

CASE STUDIES

Every year, from 5 to 10 million hectares of agricultural land becomes unusable, owing to salinity, nutrient depletion, or erosion. Greater efforts must be made to reverse this trend, particularly through community-based initiatives supported by government.

Australia – Landcare program

The Landcare program in Australia is a good example of a community-based approach to sustainable land and water management, supported by government at all levels. Promoted by the National Farmers' Federation and the Australian Conservation Foundation in the early 1990s, Landcare now has over 4 000 autonomous community groups in Australia, often organized around water catchment areas. The movement has spread to New Zealand - where there are 200 landcare groups, South Africa and other countries. Whole-farm planning is an important concept in land care management. Further, Landcare groups give preference to indigenous plant species for revegetation, so conserving local biodiversity.

In the wheatbelt of Western Australia, where there were major problems of salinity and a rising water table due to the clearing of woodlands, successful land restoration was the result of the following practices:

- Using the results of geophysical and hydrological surveys for decision-making
- Introduction of deep-rooted native plant species to lower water tables and provide pastures for sheep
- Planting of native trees along streams to lower water tables and reduce erosion and eutrophication
- Fencing to protect natural vegetation from livestock
- Surface water control to reduce waterlogging
- Encouraging innovations such "alley farming", which is a shelterbelt system in the fields between which crops can be grown, and livestock grazed.

Philippines - PAKISAMA's sustainable agriculture program

Three major forms of sustainable agriculture technologies are being practiced in the Philippines - organic farming, biodynamic farming, and the low external input and

sustainable agriculture (LEISA). Other fragmented forms of sustainable agriculture technologies include the production and use of organic fertilizer, green manuring, sloping agricultural land technology (SALT), MASIPAG seed technology, and alternative pest management (APM).

Many farmers have realized the negative effects of conventional agriculture and have started to shift to environment friendly farming systems. Given the right and adequate support needed, farmers' adoption of sustainable agriculture can already be sustained.

For the last eight years, PAKISAMA has been developing its sustainable agriculture program. In 1992, the confederation launched its four-province pilot project in the promotion of organic rice production in the lowlands. The program is now covering 91 villages with a total of 1,080 household adaptors. This translates to about 540 hectares planted to organic rice.

The status of sustainable agriculture adoption among farmers is now on a critical level. Most of the adaptors are on their first or second trials. Unless the profitability of sustainable agriculture farming is established, there is the great danger of adaptors reverting to conventional methods of agriculture, as farming remains their main source of livelihood. Three major challenges now face the program. These are: up scaling, farm diversification, and the integration of materials produced on the farm.

PAKISAMA believes that monocropping will not be an economically viable option for the farmer in the long run, given the unstable agro-climatic conditions in the Philippines. With monocropping, the risk of crop failure is very high. Thus, alternative or backup sources of income have to be created for the sustainable agriculture adaptors. Diversifying the crops planted by the farmers can do this, as can introducing poultry and livestock units, for example.

Proper integration of materials produced on the farm translates into lesser cash requirement for farm inputs.

More than the economics, diversification and integration also allow the restoration and preservation of ecological balance and biodiversity in the farm. By planting a variety of crops, farmers allow the soil to naturally restore its fertility. They also allow beneficial insects and microorganisms to thrive.

PAKISAMA also needs to upscale its sustainable agriculture program, both geographically and in terms of the production and post harvest support extended to its adaptors. There is a need to also work on the conversion of farms within the perimeter of an adaptor' farm or else,

the sustainable agriculture plots would only turn into sacrificial areas for various pest and diseases. Moreover, sustainable agriculture must be promoted widely in specific barangays or provinces to produce the mass or quantity needed to influence local agricultural programs and policies.

Given the relative newness of sustainable agriculture practices, constant support still needs to be extended until such time that adaptors become confident in applying the various technologies themselves. Production inputs, marketing and post harvest facilities also need to be provided so that farmers practicing sustainable agriculture are able to realize the maximum gains possible.

Austria /Finland – sustainable forestry management

Land use management plans and regulations, stakeholder consultative mechanisms, and program support form essential parts of an effective government framework for sustainable management of land resources. An example of this is the Austrian Law on Forests, first proclaimed in 1875. It lays down strict rules for the correct maintenance, management and protection of woodland, in order to guard against the overuse or depletion of this resource, for the benefit of the whole country. Land use management plans are also important in order to safeguard prime agricultural land from excessive urban development.

The Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forests and Owners of Finland (MTK) notes that "forest certification" is one new tool to promote sustainable forest management and marketing of forest products. Private forest owners hope that certification can help to promote the consumption of wood and wood products over less ecologically sound products such as cement, steel and plastics. Forest certification needs to be harmonized at the international level. MTK is therefore calling for an effective international arrangement to ensure sustainable forest management.

3. Knowledge for a sustainable food system: identifying and providing for education, training, knowledge-sharing and information needs.

Farmers know that their future depends to a large extent on the success of the totality of the agricultural knowledge system, whether it be at the international, regional, national or local level. This system, with all its institutions is a vital asset whose potential must be safeguarded for generations to come.

Protection of Indigenous knowledge

Agro biodiversity represents the careful work and knowledge of many generations of rural and indigenous peoples. Farming communities have the right to freely use and protect the diverse genetic resources, including seeds, which have been developed by them throughout history.

The research, education and training needs of farmers

New technologies in education should not be imposed on farming communities. The need for their use will emerge from the communities and organizations themselves if they are allowed to strengthen themselves.

Training methods, offering new information or technology, should respect the local knowledge of farmers by supporting and enriching it instead of degrading and denying it.

Efforts of farmers' organizations

Farmers' organisations can play a vital role in facilitating transfers of technology and know-how through exchange of information and ideas among farmers and farmers' organisations. Farmers' development co-operation is one of the most effective forms of development assistance for farmers, as farmers' organisations share similar working procedures and objectives.

In the Philippines, PAKISAMA, the national confederation of smallholders, launched a four-province pilot project in the promotion of organic rice production in the lowlands, eight years ago. Farmer trainers were trained to dissemination sustainable agriculture technologies at the village level. On-farm adaptability trials and seed banking were also conducted to determine the rice varieties that were suitable to the area's agro-climatic conditions.

Aside from testing and familiarizing with existing sustainable agriculture technologies, particularly the MASIPAG practices, PAKISAMA also focused on developing appropriate strategies and systems to facilitate the adoption of sustainable agriculture among its farmer members. Modules for the training of farmer trainers-technicians as well as for farmer adaptors were developed, tested and fine-tuned. Audio and visual materials were also produced to facilitate the dissemination of information regarding sustainable agriculture. Data banking, monitoring and evaluation tools were also developed and tried out for the program. Finally, PAKISAMA's experience regarding the implementation of the project was documented for future reference.

In Egypt, CACU - the Central Union of Agricultural Co-operatives, uses mobile video units for its extension work in the rural areas. These have proved to be a very effective means of communication knowledge, especially among people without reading or writing skills.

Efforts of governments

Government has a responsibility to continue to do basic research so that it is available to all. Too often, there is a tendency for the best science to be concentrated in the hands of a few multinational corporate giants, where it is protected by patents.

When governments establish strategies for research and extension, the following considerations should be taken into account:

- Farmers are the clients of agricultural research. They must therefore be involved in the planning, application and evaluation of research strategies, in order to ensure their relevance to farmers.

- National agricultural research institutions must ensure greater farmer involvement in their operations, through representative national farmers' organizations. Extension services must be reviewed in order to better serve farmers' needs.

- National governments and funding agencies should increase their support for agricultural research and extension. Through disarmament, funds must be redirected to agricultural development.

Concerted action must be taken by farmers' organizations at all levels, in order to establish the necessary representation and feedback mechanisms to facilitate the diffusion of research results to farmers. This action has to be taken in such a way as to strengthen the agricultural research and extension system.

Linkages

Institutional links between farmers, researchers and extension are beneficial to all parties concerned. In particular:

- Research and extension institutions benefit from farmer feedback and guidance in their work, at all levels, ensuring that the results of their work are useful and accessible to farmers.
- Research and extension institutions benefit from the financial and 'political' support of farmers, at all levels, ensuring the sustainability of the quality of research and extension, as well as the continuity of the corresponding institutions.
- Farmers benefit from regular and useful technical support given by research and extension, which serves as the basis of sustainable agriculture.

Intellectual property rights

The present system of protection of intellectual property rights does not protect the traditional knowledge of indigenous communities, for example, efforts made by farmers in developing countries to develop local food and medicinal plant varieties over generations.

4. Globalization, trade liberalization and investment patterns: economic incentives and framework conditions to promote sustainable agriculture.

Focus on family agriculture

Family farm and community based systems respond much better to the needs of the (local) populations than do corporate dependent systems, achieve a higher and more diverse output

and are, in most instances, the best guarantee in achieving food security. The current pressure on small-scale production and the displacement of farmers is leading to more poverty in the rural areas, more adverse effects for the environment and increasing food in-security.

All governments should implement policies, which limit the adverse effects of industrial production, and effectively support sustainable, family farm based farming practises.

Equity and poverty

One of the keys to sustainable development is the elimination of poverty through giving higher priority to the economic development of agriculture.

Unsustainable farming practices are sometimes the result of the acute poverty of farmers forcing the overuse and consequent destruction of renewable resources. This is due to a number of factors, such as the unequal distribution of resources and the neglect by governments of rural areas in general, and the agriculture sector in particular. The transfer of income generated in rural areas to urban areas, has led to a severe lack of investment in rural infrastructure aggravate an already grave situation. Further, farmers are often faced with inefficient marketing and distribution channels, poor training and extension services, and unfavourable prices for their products.

Adequate infrastructure and an appropriate regulatory framework

Farmers throughout the world work under very different conditions. However adequate infrastructure and an appropriate regulatory framework is essential to promote sustainable agriculture for all farmers to operate effectively. This problem is most visible in small-scale resource-poor areas, where the absence of basic infrastructure is a major impediment for economic survival of family farms and for food self-reliance.

Essential components of an adequate financial infrastructure are as follows:

- Property Rights: access to land and secure land tenure arrangements including clear mechanisms for resolution of disputes; long-term transmissible leases; "formalization" of property rights.
- Legal Infrastructure: procedures and safeguards to underpin agreements and contracts; farmers' access to legal services and rights to act collectively.

- Financial Infrastructure: well-functioning banking systems providing access to credit and financial services on reasonable terms; training in the use of financial instruments, e.g. risk management instruments; a framework enabling the use of agricultural stocks as collateral; regulations facilitating the development of farmers' financial institutions including farmers' co-operative banks.

- Marketing Infrastructure: institutions and institutional arrangements which favour market transparency, e.g. wholesale markets, inter-sectorial/inter-professional networks; strengthening of farmer-controlled marketing channels.

- Information Infrastructure: provision of reliable market information, whether through radio, newspapers, or as advisory services; product and market development facilities, including direct marketing based on information technology.

- Infrastructure for Transport, Energy, Telecommunications, Security Arrangements: the basis for development of local, provincial and national markets; accessibility / profitability of rural areas,

- Educational Infrastructure: basic literacy and numeracy for business transactions based on written contracts, and for the facilitation of rapid and efficient information flows.

Innovative ways of financing of rural infrastructures must be seriously explored, for example through involvement of the private sector, financing institutions, increases in development assistance, as well as through debt conversion. In cases where economic incentives have been accorded to the agricultural sector, mechanisms should be developed for the gradual conversion of rural incomes into rural investment.

Favourable policy environment

The multiple challenges of achieving world food security, environmental protection, and the vitality of the rural communities require a coherent long-term policy framework, and good governance.

Respect differences

Farmers should be able, within the context of the agricultural policies to generate their own production models, according to their conditions and possibilities.

Farmer exchanges

It is important to develop and improve the skills and exchange of experiences among the different regions of the world, considering the experiences of the Program Peasant to Peasant, which is successfully carried out in Central America and the Caribbean.

Strengthen farmers' organizations

Policies at national, regional and global levels must promote:

- Economic sustainability, with remunerative prices for farm products and availability of inputs and credit at affordable prices
- Ecological sustainability, including conservation of land and water resources, and

- Social sustainability - maintaining an adequate balance between rural and urban development, to prevent excessive concentration of people in urban centres.

Policies must also facilitate the development of representative, independent farmers' organisations in order to promote economic relations of equality and social justice, protection of land, food sovereignty, sustainable and equitable agricultural production based on small-scale farming operations.

The international policy environment must also be conducive to agricultural and rural development. For this purpose, the promotion of peace and economic co-operation among nations, resolution of the debt problem, and fair trading practices must be high priorities.

While in certain specific circumstances food aid is necessary for food security, such as disaster relief or refugee problems, trade rules must ensure that the provision of food aid does not provide a disincentive for local production. Whenever possible and appropriate, food aid programs must also aim to procure food from neighbouring countries.

Recognition of women in agriculture

Women play a central role in household and community food sovereignty. Hence they have an inherent right to resources for food production, land, credit, capital, technology, education and social services, and equal opportunity to develop and employ their skills.

Action is needed to promote women to attain the leadership to which they are entitled in the struggle for social equality, forming an active part of the economic and social life and contributing with their capability and intelligence to decision making.

Mechanisms to protect the poor against the adverse effects of globalization

Access to Markets

In the interests of evidence based (scientific) decision-making, a full audit of the effects of the liberalization of trade in foodstuffs must be undertaken, taking into account the effects on

farm incomes, food security, farming practises, biodiversity and environmental indicators, before agreements to further reorganize the food trade are taken.

Fair and effective trade rules

The increasing interdependence of economies in a growing, competitive global market place reinforces the need for fair and effective trade rules. However, governments must take into account the special nature of agriculture and its vital contribution to the survival and development of rural economies. Food must not be treated as if it were just another tradable commodity. It is too vital to food security, the environment and indeed the future of the planet.

Technical assistance

Under the WTO Marrakech agreements, developing countries were promised increases in technical assistance. However, in practice little has been forthcoming. In a new trade round, the support promised to developing countries for technical assistance must be placed on a firm contractual basis. This support is essential to help bring their laws, policies and technical capacities into line with their commitments in WTO.

The downward trend in funds for development assistance and co-operation going to agriculture must be reversed. Greater development co-operation among farmers and farmers' organisations of industrialised and developing countries should be encouraged by channelling 0.5 percent of official development assistance funds through farmers' organisations.

Industrial concentration

Attention has rightly been drawn attention to the distortions caused by certain types of government support policies, especially in the industrialized countries. However, not enough attention has been paid to the market distortions caused by the concentrated structure of the agri-food system. A few large firms now dominate both the distribution side and the input side of the agri-food chain. There is genuine concern in the farming community that world markets are not functioning competitively.

The UN and its specialized agencies, in particular UNCTAD, must do more work in the areas of corporate concentration upstream and downstream of the farming sector. Answers need to be found to such questions as:

- What are the effects on family farming and on rural communities of increasing concentration throughout the food chain?
- How can increasing price spreads between producer prices and consumer prices be explained?
- Producer price *increases* are passed on to consumers, producer price *falls* are not. What is the reason for this asymmetry in price transmission?
- What level of concentration should trigger anti-trust action?
- Is available market information adequate for the efficient and transparent functioning of markets?

Farmers must obviously meet the specific demands of the particular markets that they wish to supply. This may involve entering into contracts with processors and others. However, if one company has a dominant part of a particular market, the farmer no longer has any choice in where he sells his product since a competitive market situation no longer exists.

5. Summary of recommendations

1. A favourable overall macroeconomic framework, as well as social and political stability is essential for the development of the agricultural sector.

2. Agricultural policies should focus on the peasant and small-scale, family farming sector.

3. The decline of agriculture in national and international development priorities has to be reversed by a re-appreciation of its global importance.

4. Formation of autonomous, representative farmers organizations as full partners in the establishment and implementation of rural development strategies, must be facilitated.

5. Essential rural infrastructure and a basic regulatory framework for agriculture must be established, or reinforced, including effective marketing channels, credit systems, land tenure systems and technologies.

6. A new partnership for agricultural and rural development should be set up among the main stakeholders, with clarity of purpose and a clear division of roles among governments, farmers' organizations, and other sectors and institutions.

7. Measures must be taken to ensure a more rapid and effective transfer of know-how and use of new environmentally friendly technologies, especially through greater dialogue between farmers' organizations and research institutions, as well as through farmers' development cooperation.

8. Farmers must have direct input into formulating agricultural policies at all levels. The United Nations and related organizations will have to undergo a process of democratization to enable this to become a reality. Everyone has the right to honest, accurate information and open and democratic decision-making. These rights form the basis of good governance, accountability and equal participation in economic, political and social life, free from all forms of discrimination. Rural women, in particular, must be granted direct and active decision-making on food and rural issues.